V. ECONOMIC LIFE

Sources of Food

AGRICULTURE

The foundation of Tanala economic life is agriculture and the natives cannot conceive of existence without it. During the seasons of planting and harvest all other activities are suspended. Tanala who have entered the employ of Europeans will always specify that they must receive leave at these times to return to their villages to attend to their rice, and will do so even when it entails a considerable financial loss. Every able-bodied member of the tribe takes part in the work and even kings do not consider it beneath their dignity to work on their own plantations. 241 [643]

The account of Ikongo agriculture given by Sadaro Antoine is of such interest that it seems best to quote it in full. He says: "Our crops are rice, maize, manioc, beans, bananas, *soembo* and *kalamaka* [two varieties of ground nut] and many sorts of greens, *anamamy*, *mangesotra*, *anatsonga*, etc.

"The growing of rice is our principal culture and it is the foundation of our food. Our ancestors knew only six varieties: *sary lava*, *sary botrika*, *velomizy*, *sary mandinika*, *bemalady* and *malady*. Rice is cultivated twice a year, the first crop being called *sary aloha* and the second *sary afara*. The Ikongo have three sorts of land: 1. *Tany* [newly cleared forest]. 2. *Haoka* [swampy land]. 3. *Hosy* [terraced and irrigated land]. The *sary aloha* is sown in the *haoka* or *hosy* in the month *Maka* [July] and harvested in the month *Asaramanitsy* [November]. The *sary afara* is sown in the *tany* in *Asaramanitsy* [November] and harvested in *Volasira* [April]. 243 [31] [221]

"This is how the *tany* is made: The weather is fine, the sun bright. It commences to be hot. The *ombiaty* and *famitra* are in flower, seeds sprout, and the shoots of the *amonta*, *volombero* and *soamboa* begin to open. The birds *fitatram*, *vailonga* and *olily* sing from the trees. These are the signs foretelling the *Sakose* [time for cutting the *tany*]. The men leave the village and go to some mountain or hollow covered with thick forest. They halt at the edge of the forest and divide the land to make the *tany*. Each one sets up a mark on his part, the *fanapon tany*. Satisfied with the division they return to the village loaded with faggots. The next morning all go to work. Everything, trees, bushes and vines, is cut down. After two or three days of individual work the men begin to help each other (in cutting down

XIV. A LEGEND

(From manuscript of Rodney Antoine)

538 [The Tanala have a rather rich folklore and delight in telling and hearing stories. Many of these are historical, others are romantic or humorous. The long contact which the Malagasy have had with Europeans, Arabs and Africans is reflected in this lore, which contains motifs from the most diverse sources. Most of the non-historical stories I heard among the Tanala are known to most other tribes and as several good collections of Malagasy folklore have already been published it is unnecessary to give them here. The appended story is given as a fair sample.]

221 538 After the harvest of the hill rice, at the end of the month *Volasira* [April], the Tanala return to their villages which have been abandoned for six months while the people lived at the *tavy* [clearings]. From May to July, when the cultivation of beans begins, the Tanala stay in their villages and do no work. On good evenings the people have their meal in common in the public square of the village. After the meal, the children gather around the old people and these tell them stories and proverbs. This is one of the stories they tell:

539 Ramangavato had two wives, Pelakatratroka, who was head wife, and Pelakaeo. Pelakatratroka had a son, Rangorobemana. Pelakaeo had two sons, Andriamanikandro and Andriamanibola. When Rangorobemana grew up, he married two wives, Raseatombozato and Tsiboiaharea. His brothers stole his wives and carried them away overseas. Rangorobemana was desperate and went sadly to the forest to make a *tavy* [burned clearing for rice]. He lit a great fire and the smoke rose even to *Zanahary*. The first year *Zanahary* said nothing. The second year he was angry and sent the *fody*, the small parrot, the crow and many other birds to put out the fire, but, because they were accustomed to live on the earth, they did not return. Finally *Zanahary* sent one called Rahino, with a heavy rain. "In putting out my fire you are making me die," said Rangorobemana to Rahino. "You would do well to kill me." "I have not the right to kill you," answered Rahino, and he returned to the sky to lay Rangorobemana's complaint before *Zanahary*.

"If he does not make another *tavy*," said *Zanahary*, "and if he takes another wife, he will have a son. Still, at the moment of the birth I advise him to plant a pointed bamboo stake in front of the mother. If he does not, the child will come out by her head."